

**Qualified Independent  
HR Practitioner**

**HR & Business Mentor**

**SHL Psychometric  
Assessor & Interpreter**

**Six Sigma Green Belt**

**Committee Board  
Member HR Institute  
of NZ (HRINZ)  
(2006 – To Date)**

**Marlborough Sub  
Committee for  
HRINZ (2008 – To  
date)**

## **Jo Birnie Principal Consultant Prestantia Consulting Ltd**

An outgoing professional, possessing strong communication and organisational skills. Management & HR Consultant, with a vast range of commercial experience committed to providing leading edge HR support and exemplary customer service.

Specializing in a variety of services to improve productivity, efficiency and promote positive communication and employee morale while reducing employment related risks. Trained and qualified in the UK with experience in UK, Australia and New Zealand markets, both public and private sector, in-house and as a consultant. I offer customised solutions to fit all industries & occupations, helping you improve the performance of your workforce and solve the complex HR issues arising.



## **Getting it right the first time will save time and money later.**

Redundancies are increasingly the subject of media hype. For employers a changing economy can mean changing staffing requirements, and the need to make people redundant. However, even in a recession, every termination of employment on grounds of redundancy must be justifiable. If an employer does not handle a redundancy correctly it can lead to personal grievances, investigations by the Employment Relations Authority, and in some cases reinstatement.

This means that the employer must behave in a way a fair and reasonable employer would (not 'could') have done in all the circumstances (s103A, Employment Relations Act).

The decision to make an employee's position redundant falls within the management prerogative of employers.

However, the employer needs to be able to show both genuine commercial reasons and that it followed a fair and reasonable process.

A genuine redundancy occurs when a position becomes superfluous to an employer's needs. Employers should be careful not to refer to any dissatisfaction with performance when discussing redundancy proposals with employees. If the employer does that they run the risk of the employee successfully claiming any subsequent redundancy was not genuine, but was instead a device to get rid of them because of performance issues.

The Courts have articulated a number of things employers can do to ensure they act fairly and reasonably.

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## **Choose wisely in redundancies**

In the current economic climate some companies are struggling. Predominantly I deal with companies in Marlborough, Tasman and the West Coast regions and have found feedback from most that the economic downturn hasn't affected them as yet.

If companies are struggling and must lay off employees, they should choose very carefully and make sure they are letting go of the right people to ensure long-term survival.

Companies must take a long term approach to the global economic crisis, and where possible try to look five or even ten years into the future to see where the business is heading and how they are going to deal with future challenges.

One of the biggest mistakes companies make, is not properly assessing the human capital within the business to find out who their best employees are and who they can actually afford to let go.

If your company finds they have no choice but to make positions redundant and lay off staff make sure you have made the right decision for the ongoing viability of your company.

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## Getting it right the first time will save time and money later. Continued.

Consultation is required in virtually all redundancy situations before any decision is made.

Before consultation the employer must provide the employee with relevant information surrounding the proposed changes, and the employer's reasoning behind them. This consultation must be open and frank, and while the employer is entitled to have a proposal in mind the employer cannot predetermine the outcome.

An employee should be given the opportunity to consider any proposal to disestablish his or her position and to comment on it. The proposal must be precise enough to enable the employee to provide useful comment, and the employee should be given a reasonable opportunity to consider the proposal employees should be advised of the right to take advice and/or bring a representative to any meetings. In addition, employees should be given a reasonable opportunity to take advice.

Consideration should be given to the employee's objections before the decision is made. An obligation to consult with an employee does not mean an obligation to get their agreement.

It is important that the "consultation" process is well documented, to establish that a fair process has been followed by the employer including letters to the employee, and notes of meetings

If a fair procedure has been followed, the employee should already be aware that their job is at risk and that their comments and suggestions regarding the situation will have been considered by the employer.

The employee should be informed of the decision in a

face to face meeting. A final opportunity should be given for feedback and if the employee raises new issues the employer should consider them.

An employer will be required to give an employee a fair and reasonable amount of notice about their redundancy in accordance with their employment agreement. The notice period begins when the decision is made and the employee is informed of it. Even though the employee may be aware of the possibility of redundancy, either before or during the consultation process, this does not constitute notice of the redundancy.

Employers will sometimes offer an employee the opportunity to redeploy to a different position within the organisation. This is not an entitlement; the employer is not obligated to do so, unless it is a term of the employee's employment agreement.

Alternatives to redundancy should be carefully considered, ideally also in consultation with the employee. Transferring an employee to other work sites, retraining and voluntary redundancy are all options that should be considered.

Employers are not obligated to pay compensation to employees, who have been made redundant, unless it is a condition of their employment agreement. However, procedural failures during the redundancy process, may mean the court will award employees compensation for the hurt and humiliation.

**The ability to conduct a fair and effective restructuring is an essential business tool.**

## Employee Engagement

Ensuring that employees are engaged is crucial in keeping workplace morale and productivity high.

There is clear evidence that high levels of employee engagement correlates to individual, group and corporate performance in areas such as retention, turnover, productivity, customer service and loyalty.

In a typical workplace environment during the best of times, only 29 percent of employees are actively engaged in their jobs, while 71 percent are disengaged, either not engaged at all (54 percent) or actively disengaged (17 percent)--according to the most recent Gallup Management Journal's Employee Engagement Index.

There are many drivers of employee engagement:

**Trust and integrity** – how well managers communicate and 'walk the talk'.

**Nature of the job** –Is it mentally stimulating day-to-day?

**Line of sight between employee performance and company performance** – Does the employee understand how their work contributes to the company's performance?

**Career Growth opportunities** –Are there future opportunities for growth?

**Pride about the company** – How much self-esteem does the employee feel by being associated with their company?

**Coworkers/team members** – significantly influence one's level of engagement

**Employee development** – Is the company making an effort to develop the employee's skills?

**Relationship with one's manager** – Does the employee value their relationship with their manager.

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to employee engagement, keeping employees engaged and

productive is always daunting, however is crucial in this type of economic environment.

Eight practices that can assist you in supporting your employees and improving employee engagement are:

- Instill an inspiring purpose
- Provide recognition
- Be an expediter for your employees
- Coach your employees for improvement

- Communicate fully
- Face up to poor performance
- Promote teamwork
- Listen and involve

Improving employee engagement will help drive business results in the long run and develop a productive business.

## Health & Safety

An Australian study found that 33% of senior managers are not serious about safety according to WorkSafe Victoria. A survey of 1160 supervisors found that the 33 per cent who were categorized as “disgruntled” were in workplaces where upper management didn’t care about health and safety.

## HR and Business Consultancy Services Offered

<p><b>Employment and Industrial Relations</b> Provide support and advice on workplace relations and the relevant legislation that affects the employer-employee relationship. Development of employment agreements and documentation that best suits your relationship and situation with your employee.</p>	<p><b>Change Management</b> A structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organisations from a current state to a desired future state. Change is a part of every project we undertake, encompassing a number of techniques to achieve sustained improvement through change management.</p>	<p><b>Psychometric Assessments</b> The strength and productivity of successful organisations lies with people. We use a range of assessment tools to accurately identify an individual's talents, strengths and weaknesses, and to diagnose organisational problems.</p>
<p><b>Performance Management</b> Designed to be future-focused, support pay for performance programs, monitor milestones of goal achievement, and systematically improve the measured results of your employees and organisation. We facilitate the development of core organizational competencies, influence SMART goal setting, and clearly articulate expectations in order to have a measurable results-oriented tool for effective implementation.</p>	<p><b>Project Management</b> Training, and resources to help organisations improve performance and deliver critical projects successfully. Project management is the discipline of planning, organising and managing resources to bring about the successful completion of specific project goals and objectives. The primary challenge of project management is to achieve all of the project goals and objectives while honoring the project constraints.</p>	<p><b>Process and Systems Development</b> Professional human resource advice, policy solutions and job description writing and evaluation services. Development of employment policies and procedures and employee handbook. Provide practical guidance on administration of policies and pre-employment or post-employment duties required of the company.</p>
<p><b>Talent Management</b> Developing and integrating new workers, developing and keeping current workers and attracting highly skilled workers to work for your company. Companies that are engaged in talent management are strategic and deliberate in how they source, attract, select, train, develop, retain, promote, and move employees through the organisation.</p>	<p><b>Health and Safety</b> Offering both practicable and achievable health, safety and environmental Sustainability solutions to suit your organisation. from a wide range of experience in health, safety, quality, environmental and sustainability (HSQE) management.</p>	<p><b>Professional Supervision and Mentoring</b> A customised programme for Managers and Team Leaders to provide practical hands-on guidance as well as theoretical knowledge in relation to all aspects of management including leadership, performance management, delegation, communication &amp; effective time management.</p>
<p><b>Career Transition/Outplacement and redundancy</b> Managing change and redundancy in a fair and procedurally correct manner. Management Coaching through restructure and redundancy; Managing Change Workshops; Internal and external Job Search, CV Preparation and Interview Coaching; Budgeting and Financial Planning; On site consultation and redundancy support; Identifying the 'at risk' employee.</p>	<p><b>Investigations</b> We investigate and report on the facts of a case to the person or body charged with making a decision, under the procedure relevant to the case and to the member of staff concerned. Any serious allegations or formal complaints require investigation to attempt to determine as objectively as possible the relevant facts on which decisions can be based. Ensuring that the investigation process is completed correctly enables you to make the right decision with continued support thou ought the process to reduce the risk to your company.</p>	<p><b>HR Audits</b> Comprehensive report of the audit findings with recommendations prioritized, actionable work plan. Improves compliance, reviews ROI with Human Capital. Targets the organisational development and human resource practices including: Staffing and Hiring; Benefits Administration; HR Administration; Employment Practices; Education and Training; Time Off and Leaves; Health and Safety; Performance Management; Compensation; Terminations.</p>